



Google vs. Microsoft

Posted by [Pierluigi Oliverio](#) on Monday, January 03, 2011

More than a year ago, the San Jose City Council was presented with renewing its Microsoft desktop licenses. This can be an expensive line item. We have spent over seven figures in the past for licensing alone on this item. I thought to myself, and later spoke at the Council meeting, that there is no real competition for this purchase we were about to approve and wondered if we could do better. In the end, we got a government discount from a Microsoft reseller, but it was not truly competitive since Microsoft did not have any competition at City Hall.

Do you remember how Netscape used to sell web browsers? Fast forward, and now, with competition, web browsers are free. So I thought: Why not inject direct competition for our email and Microsoft Office applications? Google offers free email, calendaring, documents, forms, spreadsheets, presentations, etc., in a Software as a Service (SaaS) model—also called cloud computing.

With competition I think we may get a better price next time we renew. Or we may find a solution where we discover more value. So outside of price, since Google is free, it's a good deal (one can pay a small annual subscription for customer support). But there are other attributes as well.

First, one does not get stuck on old software, since Google is SaaS, which constantly updates the software. As a result, your information technology (IT) team does not have to update the server and the individual computers for upgrades and bug fixes, keeping your internal IT costs down. Also, an organization is not dependent on the IT person who runs the Microsoft exchange server. In most cases, if the person responsible for this item leaves, then the organization will have big problems. Google makes it much easier to manage, thus the city would not be dependent on a specific IT person. Google also allows for improved public records act requests by simply searching every email with keywords.

Personally, I enjoy collaboration via Google Apps in being able to share documents in the cloud (no vpn needed) under revision control with others in real time. It also allows the author to share or edit the document. No more going back and forth, sending endless emails with out-of-date revisions of a document.

At our Dec. 14 meeting the City Council approved a 12 month pilot of Google Apps that I initiated. There is no cost or obligation to purchase. We look forward to competition for our city dollars. (I do not own any shares of Google.)

Posted by [Pierluigi Oliverio](#) on Monday, January 03, 2011